

Inequalities in English Language Education in Bangladesh: Observations and Policy Options from Rural and Urban Schools

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Education enables people to create institutions, use new technologies, cope with their environment, and alter their behaviors. Economic and social development of a nation depends on those factors. In a broad sense education improves the capacity of individuals and institutions to contribute to the social, economic, cultural, and demographic changes necessary for national development. As a whole, education is a process of providing enlightenment and skills to a nation. It is not clear how these changes occur through education, but evidence suggests that schooling and education can contribute to poverty reduction, gender equity, citizenship, and equality of life. On the other hand, research shows a negative impact of education, such as when unequal educational opportunities create discrimination based on wealth, gender, and socioeconomic role.¹⁾ Poverty may reduce the opportunities for the acquisition and the attainment of educational outcomes. Tilak mentioned the correlation between the poverty and illiteracy in Asia. He showed the lower rate of literacy and the higher percentage of poverty in a country. His research also revealed that 99 percent poor in Thailand has no education or has less than middle secondary education and nearly all poor people in Pakistan are illiterate.²⁾

In many developing countries equitable access to schooling remains an important challenge. In Bangladesh, poor students have fewer opportunities to complete any education cycle than affluent students. This article examines ways in which unequal educational opportunities and teaching practices engender discrimination among Bangladeshi learners.

The purpose of this article is threefold. First, it explores ways in which pedagogical and socio-educational differ according to medium of instruction used in Bangladeshi schools. In highlighting differences among pedagogical practices, it provides an in-depth examination of two institutions, one a rural Bengali-medium school, the other an urban Bengali-medium school. Third, it examines how English and privileges are associated and English remains inaccessible to those who are from the rural schools. Finally, it analyzes how bilingualism—English and Bengali—is a precursor to favorable attitudes toward English and to inequalities between rural and urban students. Equitable access to schooling is an important challenge for Bangladesh. The inequitable educational system in Bangladesh offers fewer opportunities to rural students to compete in any given educational cycle with wealthy students. Before going to the main parts of the article I think I should provide some background information of Bangladesh to the reader.

Demographic Profile

Bangladesh is an Islamic Republic. The Constitution of Bangladesh begins with the name of Allah and it says, “Pledging that the high ideals of absolute trust and faith in the Almighty Allah.”³⁾ This country is bordered by India on the western, eastern, and northern sides, by Myanmar on the southeast, and by the Bay of Bengal on the south. The total area of Bangladesh is 147,570 square kilometers. Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in Southern Asia.⁴⁾ The following table shows the GDP growth of Bangladesh.

The table above indicates that in 1990–1999 per capita income of Bangladesh is lower than India and Sri Lanka but higher than Pakistan. The growth of GDP is very low. If this growth rate continues, it will take thirty years to cross the poverty line for the extreme poor and it will take seventeen years for the moderate poor to cross the poverty line.⁵⁾

The size of Bangladesh is slightly smaller than the state of Wisconsin in the United States. The country’s climate is tropical with cool, dry winters and hot, humid summers (March to June), with a warm, rainy monsoon season (June to October). Its terrain is mostly a flat alluvial plain with hills in the southeast. Bangladesh’s primary natural resources include natural gas, arable land, timber, and coal. The climate is favorable for agriculture.⁶⁾

According to the World Fact Book, in 2005 Bangladesh was an over-populated, poor and often ill-governed nation despite existing domestic and international efforts to improve economic and demographic conditions. The total population of Bangladesh was 144,319,628, with almost two-thirds of all Bangladeshis employed in the agricultural sector, with rice as the single-most-important product. The population growth was estimated as 2.09% (2005 estimate). Infant mortality was about 62.6 deaths/1,000 live births, whereas life expectancy is 62.08 years. Frequent cyclones and floods, inefficient state-owned enterprises, inadequate port facilities, a rapidly growing labor force that cannot be absorbed by agriculture, delays in exploiting energy resources (natural gas), insufficient power supplies, and slow implementation of economic reforms are the main hindrances to growth. Economic development was hindered by political infighting and corruption at the level of government. Progress had also been hindered by the opposition of the bureaucracy, the public sector and other vested interest groups.⁷⁾

After independence in 1971, it was hoped that economic emancipation would lead

Table 1: Growth Rates of GDP and Per Capita Income in Some South Asian Countries, 1980–1990 and 1990–1999 (percent annually)

| | Growth of GDP | | Per capita GDP | |
|------------|---------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|
| | 1980–1990 | 1990–1999 | 1980–1990 | 1990–1999 |
| Pakistan | 6.3 | 4.0 | 3.6 | 1.5 |
| India | 5.8 | 6.1 | 3.7 | 4.9 |
| Sri Lanka | 4.0 | 5.3 | 2.6 | 4.1 |
| Bangladesh | 4.3 | 4.8 | 1.9 | 3.2 |

Source: A. M. Chowdhury and F. Alam, *Bangladesh on the Threshold of the Twenty-first Century*, (Dhaka, Bangladesh: Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2002), 74.

to political freedom, and that poverty would be eradicated. Now after thirty-six years of independence, there are disappointments in the achievements. Nearly half of the population still lives under the poverty line. Table 2 shows the social sectors of different countries in South Asia.

From the table above, it seemed that among the South Asian nations a large number of the population of Bangladesh live under the poverty line. The poverty line indicates the minimum level of income which is sufficient to achieve an adequate standard of living. Different countries have different definitions of the poverty line, but generally poverty line means “living for under \$1 a day,” which should be understood as having a daily total consumption of goods and services comparable to the amount of goods and services that can be bought in the U.S. for \$1.”⁸⁾

According to social sectors of South Asia, almost 38% of the population of Bangladesh is illiterate, but barely 20% are truly functionally literate. The female literacy rate is 26% and the male 49%. The following table shows the district literacy rates of the population of 7 years old and above in census 2001.

According to the World Fact Book in 2007, Bangladesh is acutely dependent upon foreign assistance for its development. The pressures of overpopulation, urbanization, and environmental degradation have left Bangladesh at the bottom of the ladder of low-income economies⁹⁾ with an annual per capita income of only \$2,200 (2006 estimate).¹⁰⁾

Education can contribute to reduce poverty. Indeed there are many studies which demonstrate that the key to poverty reduction is human capital. For example one year of additional schooling leads to a rise of 16% in the wages of Malaysian men and 18% in the wages of Malaysian women.¹¹⁾ The corresponding numbers for Thailand are 17% and 13%. Bangladesh, however, does not have enough schools nor do many of the schools meet minimal quality standards. Moreover the existing schools are fail-

Table 2: Social Sectors of South Asia

| | India | Pakistan | Sri Lanka | Bangladesh |
|-----------------------------------|-------|----------|-----------|------------|
| Population below poverty line (%) | 40.9 | 34 | 40.6 | 42.7 |
| Adult literacy rate (%) | 52 | 38 | 90 | 38 |
| Illiterate male adults (%) | 35 | 50 | 7 | 51 |
| Illiterate female adults (%) | 62 | 76 | 13 | 74 |

Source: M. Ahmed, *South Asia Crisis of Development: The case of Bangladesh*, (Dhaka, Bangladesh: The University Press Limited, 2002), 204.

Table 3: Literacy Rates of the Population of Different Districts of Bangladesh

| Districts | Total | Male | Female |
|------------|-------|------|--------|
| Rajshahi | 40.9 | 45.8 | 35.8 |
| Khulna | 46.2 | 50.5 | 42.4 |
| Barishal | 54.6 | 56.7 | 52.5 |
| Dhaka | 42.6 | 46.5 | 39.1 |
| Sylhet | 39.2 | 43.2 | 35.1 |
| Chittagong | 43.1 | 47.4 | 38.4 |

Source: M. M. Abdullah, *Rural Development in Bangladesh: problems and prospects*, (Dhaka, Bangladesh: Jahan Publications, 2006), 55.

ing to provide instruction to meet the demands of globalization. As a result, Bangladesh has not developed a workforce capable of competing in technical skills with other Asian developing countries.¹²⁾

According to Bangladesh 2020, in the higher secondary level of public education, the rate of inefficiency is very high. Bangladesh has an adult literacy rate of only 38%, which is much lower than Sri Lanka, for example (90%). Fifty percent of the students who enter in the primary schools of Bangladesh do not complete their five-year education and many of them achieve only a second-grade level of attainment. It takes an average of more than twelve years to complete the five-year cycle.¹³⁾ In 1996 only 200,000 students (three percent of the 11–15 age group) graduated from secondary schools in Bangladesh. This number is for a country of 144,319,628 million people, and is too few to supply the talent for the development of Bangladesh. Although Bangladesh spent 2% of its GDP on education to elevate learning achievement, the task facing Bangladesh seems to be challenging.¹⁴⁾

Rationale

Three major factors justify this study. First, when I was a junior high school student, I observed that peers from rural schools had difficulty communicating in English. Some dropped out because they found English classes too difficult and too boring. In contrast, the students from affluent families did better in English class and felt comfortable in the English class. Second, much later, when I was a student of Dhaka University, in the Department of English, I again found that students who came from rural schools had difficulties with English at the university level and were constantly dropping out year after year. Third, when I was engaged in practice teaching in old Dhaka, students could not spell their names or the name of the school in English, though they had been learning English from the first grade. I talked with the students personally and sensed that their problems were related to educational and institutional practices.

This article is organized into three parts. The first presents a social and historical background of Bangladesh. The second describes the institution, the students, and the data collected and report on the institutional and educational practices that create discrimination among the rural and urban students. Finally, it situates its findings within the larger issue of the role of English in Bangladesh and offers suggestions for improving language instruction in those institutions.

Socio-Historical Background

The history of education on the Indian sub-continent began in the Vedic times. That regions education (from about 1500 B.C. to 600 B.C.) improved the periods of the Brahmins and the Dharmasastras. Education was Hindu education and the main principles were borrowed from the Vedic system. Vedic education is actually spiritual education. Education at that time was free from external control or politics. The teaching method was verbal and explanatory and there was no disagreement about the medium of instruction. After Muslim rulers conquered the subcontinent, the religious education (Madrassa and Madrasa education) started on the sub-continent. The goal of this type of education was to provide religious education based on the Holy

Koran. The religious education included the study of Holy Koran, Islamic history, Arabic literature, grammar, philosophy, mathematics, and geography. Arabic and Persian were adopted as instructional languages, and vernacular languages were neglected.¹⁵⁾

Colonial Indian education started with the advent of the East India Company (1600–1854). The British came to Bengal in 1757, and were present until 1935. Initially, the British wanted to improve the Indian educational system on the basis of the indigenous system of education. It was assumed that there was no specific language and education policy at that time. It was also not evident the British wanted to teach English to the people of the Indian subcontinent. At first, the British emphasized local languages, but it was the Indians who at first wanted to learn the English language. In 1800, Marquess Wellesley, the governor general, established the college of Fort William in Calcutta. Its aim was to teach East India Company officials local Indian language and cultures. However, the educated Indian middle class opposed these policies because they felt excluded from social, political and economic advancement. In 1816, the Bengali middle class established The Hindu College in Kolkata. Its goal was teaching English language and literature. Thus, it was not only the British but also the local elites who demanded English on account of its social and economic prestige.¹⁶⁾

Thus, access to jobs in the colonial administration was strictly tied to a mastery of English. Viswanathan argued that English language teaching in India was a form of social, cultural and political control.¹⁷⁾ It produced a class of people who were alienated from their own languages and cultures and discontented with the colonial rule.¹⁸⁾ But few people had access to colonial education, and the colonial language was acquired by only a minority of the Indian people.

Method

The data and findings reported here are drawn from a two-month study of the differences between the English classes of the rural and urban area. I used qualitative methods in this study, and this article describes the result obtained from the data analysis. The exploratory descriptive research method was used to investigate differences between the classes observed in two schools. Generally, qualitative research methods are designed to focus on what actually people say or do; “they are about studying the experiences and the meanings of those being researched.”¹⁹⁾ Robinson points out that in qualitative research, theories, and concepts arise from the process of doing research.²⁰⁾ Through the classroom observations I could understand the differences between the classes in rural and urban schools.

Fieldwork was undertaken in March 2006 in urban (Dhaka) and rural (Gazipur) locations. A number of data collection methods were used: handwritten field notes, thirty-eight hours of videotape, twenty-four hours of audio taped teachers and policy planners interviews, and classroom documents. Data collection, management and analysis began on the first day of the fieldwork and continued throughout the study.

Observation of Classes

For this study, a total of twenty-six classes were observed at one Bengali-medium school in an urban area and at one Bengali-medium school in a rural area. Access and

consent to conduct the study were obtained from observations were very important to identify differences between what the people say and what the rationale are in the classroom. My observations focused on different teaching styles and the methods employed by English teachers.

Profile of Urban High School

The Shobujbagh Government Girls' High School, a girls school established in 1957, has an entrance with a nice garden with green trees, seasonal flowers, and fruits. The school has one "L" shaped building with a large playground. The school has two shifts of classes: morning and afternoon. Located in a center of Dhaka city, capital of Bangladesh, the school has more than 2,000 student and fifty-two teachers. Its teacher-student ratio is 1:38.

Most of the students of this school come from middle- or upper-middle class families. This school does not represent the upper class of the society. Most of the parents are government employees. There are many students who cannot afford their school fees. The school has a full scholarship program for students.

The school does well on national examinations. In recent years, 97.08% of its students passed the national examinations.²¹⁾ This school was designated an exemplary school by the national board of education and received an award from UNICEF.²²⁾ This school has earned many national awards.²³⁾

Profile of Rural High School

Shinabazar High School, a rural co-ed school in Gazipur, an area 50 km away from Dhaka, can be reached by auto rickshaw because of flood-damaged roads which makes the roads too rough for other vehicles. The school was built on land donated by a local person. Its entrance has a small, broken gate made of tin. The school has two buildings: one in brick, the other in tin. It is a co-ed school. The brick building has classrooms and one teachers' room, which is also used as the principal's office. Most of the students come from middle or lower class families involved in agricultural work.

The school has three terms and after each term students need to sit for an exam. The school has no playground; a small pond is located in front of the school building. The principal and teachers mentioned that they could not fill the pond for lack of money. The school badly needs a playground. Prior to 2004, there were no toilet facilities in the school, so the students had to use a nearby brush area. In 2004, a local NGO built two toilets for the students. For the teachers, there was a small toilet beside the head teacher's room. The school has no extracurricular activities.

Findings

English Teaching at Rural and Urban Schools

The educational practices that appear to engender discrimination between schools emanate from the teaching of grammar in rural and urban schools and the use of Bengali and local dialects in the classroom.

Grammar Class at the Urban School

Grammar was the main topic of one class taught by Ms. Sabiha to year IX students (In Bangladesh, Roman numerals refer to grades). On this particular day, she taught types of sentences. The teacher came to class with no lesson plan and chose topic randomly from the textbook. She wrote the following on the chalkboard:

Simple-compound—complex sentence

From my observation post in the back of the classroom, I could barely hear the teacher. She asked for the definition of a complex sentence by calling the names of some specific students. Those who could not answer had to stand for the whole period. During the post-class interviews with the students, they said that the topic was new to them even though they supposedly learned it when they were in year VIII. Some students went to the chalkboard and wrote the definition of simple, complex, and compound sentences. The teacher tried to speak English, but she appeared to feel very uncomfortable because of my presence. The students at the back said that she tried to speak English because I was there. She spoke English first and then she translated into Bengali. I observed in most of the grammar classes at this school that teachers needed to use Bengali. If they did not use Bengali, students did not understand the lesson content. The teacher gave the students homework toward the end of class.

There were differences between senior and junior teachers. Senior teachers (who had served for a minimum of twenty years) displayed power distance from the students. The young teachers were more friendly and permissive with students.

Grammar Class at Rural School

One hundred eleven students enrolled on the day of my visit. Although almost 50% of the students were absent, it seemed to me there was space for only another five students. As the schools do not have sufficient classroom space, all the students from science, arts, and commerce were sitting in the same classroom. The teacher started the class by writing the following three sentences on the chalkboard:

1. When the girl stood by the window, she looked out.
2. The girl stood by the window and looked out.
3. Standing by the window the girl looked out.

He used three sentences to introduce three grammatical concepts: simple, compound, and complex.

He described that the first sentence as complex, the second as compound, and the third as simple. Then, he defined of three kinds of sentences in Bengali. After that, he introduced rules of transformation: Complex to Simple, for example, When the boy went to market, he bought some goods (simple). Then he told the students that they can make it present participle by adding “ing,” and, thus, the sentence will be “Going to market, the boy bought some goods.” Then he said: “Everybody write your *khata* (notebook) and make it simple.” After that, he wrote, “When the thief saw the police, he ran away (simple).”

In this way, he gave one example after another and checked students' papers. Because there were so many students, he could not answer all of their questions. He ended class by thanking the students for their participation. He used regional Bengali in the classroom. He was a non-subject teacher, meaning someone who teaches a subject other than one in his area of expertise. In this case, the teacher studies general subjects and teaches English. Though he has taken National Curriculum Textbook Board (NCTB) training, he looked uneasy teaching in English.

Language Use in the Classroom

The observed differences between the grammar classes of the urban Bengali-medium school and those of the rural Bengali-medium school are that in the former teachers tried to use English much of the time, their students understood English better. In rural schools, however, teachers used more Bengali, as students feel more difficulty understanding English. In urban schools, most of the teachers speak in standard Bengali and are also fluent in English. But in the rural school, most of the time, teachers used a local variety of Bengali in the English classes. Both rural English teachers observed are non-subject teachers. In the urban area, the students are more spontaneous and confident, while rural students seemed withdrawn. Students from the rural school only answered the teacher's question when called upon by name. Other observed grammar classes dealt with types of phrases, voice change, and types of sentences.

Rural-Urban Differences

Urban schools are well equipped and have better facilities, such as books, chalk, dusters, desks, good buildings, toilets, and surroundings. A majority of the teachers are female, and some of them have teacher-training certificates. The school has an environment conducive to teaching and learning English. Students in this school say they are interested in learning English.

By contrast, rural school lacks basic resources such as books, dictionaries, chalkboards, toilets, classrooms, satisfactory buildings, and surroundings. Most of the teachers are male and non-subject teachers. Teachers as well as students lack fluency in standard Bengali. The school does not have an adequate environment to teach and learn English. Students depend on rote learning at this school.

In the urban Bengali school, the teacher wrote the objectives on the chalkboard and involved students in tasks. In contrast, in the rural Bengali school, the teacher explained the rules in Bengali and did not write the objectives of the lesson on the board. He also made some mistakes in his definitions. Because there were so many students, the teacher in the rural school could not involve the students in tasks. Sometimes the teacher asked general questions, and some students raised their hands to answer them. The teacher could not review written assignments and exercises in class because of limited classroom space.

Teaching Proficiencies

From observations and interviews with teachers it was clear that the English language proficiencies of rural teachers lagged behind those of teachers in urban schools. In Shobujbagh Government Girls High School (urban Bengali-medium school), some

young teachers were proficient in English, but some senior teachers lacked the ability and confidence to teach it effectively. Even though they have problems of pronunciation, most did not make grammatical mistakes.

In Shinabahar High School (rural Bengali-medium school), there were only two English teachers and both were non-subject teachers. They were not proficient in English and they made many grammatical errors. Because of their poor English language skills, they excluded little confidence in teaching English, perhaps because of their low level of education. One teacher majored in Islamic studies in college, and another was graduated from two-year college. Though they received training from the NCTB for three months, my classroom observation showed that they lacked knowledge of the basics of English, typical teaching methods, grammar, fluency in English, and standard pronunciation.

It is clear that the teachers who teach English (especially in the rural area) are poorly educated. Teachers of English themselves have not been exposed to suitable oral models. Moreover, there are many problems, such as poorly equipped schools and financially strapped programs.

Living Conditions

The living conditions of the teachers differed by locations. Two teachers' homes close to the school in Gazipur had tin-frames and roofs. The teachers had one or two traditional rooms. The home of one of the Bengali medium school's teachers was an apartment in a middle-class neighborhood, where most of the tenants were high-profile government employees.

In the urban area, the number of children not enrolled in school is small because of the lack of opportunities and reasons to enroll. Children are not needed for gardening, farming, and household chores. In the rural area, however, children do house work and help their parents in tasks such as farming and gardening. Consequently, the number of rural school-age children not enrolled in school is comparatively high.

Rote Learning

Rural students engaged in rote learning and were exposed to traditional teaching styles. The few books available were outdated. Most classroom chalkboards had a list of sentences and words in English, which students were required to memorize each day. Sometimes sentences were ungrammatical and were irrelevant to the students' environments. In one class, one teacher wrote a definition of "voice" on the chalkboard that was incomprehensible. The students memorized words or sentences that they never used in their daily life. Most of the time students use Bengali in their homes. In spite of this fact, English remained the instructional medium of the secondary school. Because of these problems, students tend to have learning difficulties when they go to the tertiary level of education, where the medium of instruction is only English.

Thus, a key finding of this study is that there are disparities between rural and urban education in Bangladesh. Rural students lag behind urban students and are disadvantaged, making Bangladesh a country with two disparate educational systems. It is predictable that it would be harder for rural students to get into a college or university,

because their basic knowledge of English is much weaker than of urban students. Educational reform policies are critical to equalizing educational opportunity for all students.

Policy Options and Conclusions

Even though Bengali plays a fundamental role in the ideology of Bangladeshi nationalism, Bangladesh has failed to take steps to make Bengali an effective co-equal language of instruction. Production of Bengali textbooks and other educational materials is inadequate for widespread use of Bengali for subject-matter instruction. Indeed, English is still the preferred language of textbooks. Moreover, the difficulty for teachers is enormous, as few teachers outside the capital have sufficient English language skills to teach English well, and the high student-teacher ratio (secondary level 1:56; up to 1:73 in many areas) makes language teaching particularly difficult, even for the most highly qualified teachers.²⁴⁾

Arguably, English is linked to socioeconomic class in Bangladesh. English is used in the home and in many social settings among upper-class families, and the language offers significant economic opportunity and privileges for its speakers. Consequently, elites are generally reluctant to support universal Bengali-medium instruction. Although it may reduce social inequality, Bengali-medium education would also reduce the linguistic advantages being enjoyed by English speakers.²⁵⁾ Given the obvious economic advantages that English affords its speakers under the current system, middle-class families try to ensure that their children have access to English-medium instruction. Thus public pressure for English language teaching at an early age is widespread, including the policy of teaching English from grade one. Yet for most children, English language proficiency is quite low,²⁶⁾ in part because of the low level of teachers' English-language proficiency and the low quality of English-language education. Thus the present policy continues to support advantages for groups having access to English education, while contributing to the ongoing educational difficulties facing the rural and urban poor. The medium of education, Bengali or English, distinguishes the well-educated and economically advantaged urban dwellers from the under-educated and economically distressed rural population. Facing the consequences of the current medium of instruction policy is one of the most important issues for policymakers in the educational system of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh government needs to formulate an education and language policy that would benefit of all people, including rural agricultural workers. Such a policy could be termed "FLUTE." The term "FLUTE" is constituted from the first letter of five major recommendations. The term FLUTE stands for Full Enrollment, Literacy, Unified Education System, Teacher Training, and English Teaching.

1. Full Enrollment in Primary Education

Even though primary education is free and compulsory and enrollment has increased, full enrollment remains an unattained goal. To increase enrollment in the primary schools in Bangladesh, the government needs to take steps to aid poor school-aged children whose parents cannot bear the cost for uniforms and food. The school should take measures to attract students, perhaps by providing scholarships or

financial aid for poor families.

2. *Literacy*

Bangladesh should make eradication of literacy a higher priority than English language learning. At present the literacy rate in Bangladesh is very low (about 38%). As mentioned earlier that nearly half of the population still lives under the poverty line and large number of population of Bangladesh are illiterate. Although literacy of all citizens has been a declared aim of the national education policy of Bangladesh, only limited progress has been made. Freeing the country from illiteracy remains an unachieved goal.

3. *Unified Educational System*

Promotion of one education system in Bangladesh is necessary. The country has three parallel systems of education. There is almost no common ground among the Bengali-medium schools, the English-medium schools, and the Madrasha system of education. These three systems serve three discrete social classes: the English-medium schools serve the upper class, Bengali-medium the middle class, and Madrasha system the lower class of the society. Madrasha education and English-medium schools have little in common, except that both are separated from the culture of the country. They use different syllabi and instructional media.²⁷⁾ It was possible for the students to move from one stream to another, but the gaps among these three streams have become so wide that it is almost impossible for students to move between streams.

4. *Teachers Training*

At present, there is a shortage of qualified teachers in secondary schools. Many teachers cannot get training when they get a job. Teacher training courses must be included at the graduate level.

5. *English Teaching in Rural and Urban Schools*

English can be made optional in rural schools and compulsory in urban or elite schools. At present English is compulsory for all secondary schools in Bangladesh except the Madrasah Schools. This study shows that English education in rural areas is not cost efficient. The socioeconomic background of the rural students does not support learning English in Bangladesh. Thus, English can be made optional in the secondary schools especially in the rural areas. Some elite schools or schools with trained teachers can make English compulsory.

If this policy can be effectively implemented, students can go to secondary school by taking vocational training courses. After graduating from secondary school, they can do work which is favorable to their economic and social status. There is a minuscule literature on Bangladeshi minority languages and dialects. More extensive work is needed in this regard.

The birth of Bangladesh in 1971 lies in the language movement. After thirty-six years of independence, it is time to promote a language policy beneficial to the whole nation. All citizens should have access to education that enhances the national devel-

opment. Rural students and students from disadvantaged families should have access to equal education. By analyzing the needs of Bangladesh, the government should formulate a language and education policy that reduces, not exacerbates achievement gaps. Policy planners are called upon to formulate a language and education policy whose goal is driven by social equality for all Bangladeshis.

Notes

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Appendix A: Checklist for Direct Observation in Schools

Teacher's name _____ School _____
Grade _____ Subject _____
Date of Observation _____ Length of visit _____
Observer's name _____

A. Classroom Conditions

1. How many students are in the class?

Ans:

Comments:

2. What is the ratio of the students and the teachers?

3. What is the ratio of males and females in the class?

4. Number who attended (compared to enrollment) (Average attendance per year or per term)

5. Is the atmosphere of the classroom relaxed?

6. Is the atmosphere of the classroom well controlled?

7. Doors of the classroom

8. Blackboard

9. Other equipments:

10. General noise level (for e.g., street noise, room echo, sound of rainfall on the roof, air conditioning noise etc.)

11. Ventilation (stuffy, cold, hot etc)

12. Where do the students sit?

13. Where are handouts placed?

14. Are handouts are passed out?

B. Instruction

1. Topic maintenance

2. How does teacher handle student questions?

3. Are the teacher's answers clear?

4. Language used in the classroom

5. Does the teacher allow time for question?

6. Are handouts used in the class activities?

7. Are the students prepared for the class?

Appendix B: School Building of Sobujbagh Girls High School



Appendix C: School Building of Shinabahr High School



Appendix D: Science Classroom Shinabahar at High School



Appendix E: Teacher's Desk at Shinabahar High School

